

Tyne at Blackfeet Community College The Issksiniip Project

Tyne Bearleggings, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe, is a TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipient who has gotten a start on her chosen career path with the help of Blackfeet Community College's Issksiniip Project, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program from the Office of Family Assistance. She is very dedicated to receiving her nursing degree, which has been a lifelong dream, and she calls her success story "a miracle."

Tyne is the mother of three beautiful children, 7-year-old Tegan, 13-year-old Trevor, and 15-year-old TeAyres. Before coming to the Issksiniip Project, she struggled with earning her GED (General Educational Development) diploma. She went to nursing school to become a State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) in Akron, Ohio. The difficulties of juggling home and school responsibilities were overwhelming. She had two jobs just to make ends meet. Eventually she decided to move back to Browning, Montana. She then applied for and was accepted into the HPOG program. It was determined that Tyne was still lacking her GED, a prerequisite to the nursing program she was trying to pursue.

The Issksiniip Project helped Tyne find the resources she needed to prepare for the GED test, and now she is "proud to be a GED graduate." Then the project helped her enroll in a two-year nursing degree program. A year later, she is well on her way to becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). She is thankful to the project for providing the necessary supplies for school in addition to matching her with tutors to aid in her academic success.

Tyne says, "If you are willing to dedicate yourself to what you want to become and follow through with it, then you will be successful. If I can do it, you can too. Give it a try. You have a right to be a success story too, and foremost our children deserve to look at a bright future."

Maeghan Rides At The Door at Blackfeet Community College Issksiniip Project

I have not always known exactly what I wanted to do for a career but I've always known I would be in a helping profession. Upon graduating with my Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from the University of Montana, I worked three jobs (two at a local mental health center and one at a youth shelter) to support myself and pay off the student loan debt that I had accumulated. I struggled to be on my own for the first time in the so-called "real world" of responsibilities, but during this year I also had the most rewarding experiences of my life. Providing supportive conversation to populations of adults with severe disabling mental illness and adolescents was very fulfilling, and although I didn't always know what to say, I learned that being a good listener was just as important. My desire to professionally counsel people led me to pursue a graduate degree in mental health counseling.

I was beginning my third year of the counselor education program when I first learned of the Issksiniip Project. Although students generally finish the counselor education degree within two years, I had taken the slower track to fulfill my responsibilities of being a partner and a new mother. At this point, I was struggling to finance my education and didn't know how I was going to find the funds to finish my degree. I was in the process of appealing to receive financial aid, and I wasn't eligible to receive assistance from my tribe since they only fund two years of graduate school. I was worried because I had accepted a year-long internship at the campus counseling center, and I wasn't sure how I was going to attend school, do my internship, work a part-time job, and pay for childcare all at the same time. I was afraid I would not be eligible to apply for the Health Professions Opportunity Grant program since there are limited scholarship opportunities to aid mental health counseling students. However, I was ecstatic to learn I was eligible to apply, and to this day I do not know how I would have funded my last year of education without this opportunity. Because of this scholarship I was able to finish my education and gain relevant experience toward my goal of becoming a professional Counselor.

I am proud to say I am now working as a Career Counselor at the same institution where I received my education. I love being able to help students find career paths and become competitive candidates in their fields. I am still in the process of gaining hours toward being applying to become a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, but I am much closer to achieving this goal as a result of this program. I am thankful to be in a position where I can let other students know about the HPOG program.